

Samantha's Births

- *for Stephanie and Wendy*

Birth One

Samantha,
you touched down in a bottle
the color of stars

at the Spokane cryo bank
on a silvery day, scales
of soft rain coming down.

The man handed
your cradle to me
and I held you first

the sleek tail
that would become your backbone
and your other momma

held me, touched the smallest
sliver of you. We strapped this
swimming, shimmering you

strong and strong

into a car seat, for the drive
home.

Birth Two

You were conceived
in quiet
on an afternoon
of hollow bones, and I
dreamed later of a beach
full of gull feathers
and how I filled
my hands with them, trying to find
the one feather
that would become
your face.

Birth Three

I drank a sea-full
of water, floated
in a warm bath,
your momma by my side

light scaling the windows
of the hospital room

as you swam and turned
and fishtailed through
me as I watched

your coming
in a mirror, with each push

strong and strong

watched your sleek head
turning coming turning
as you swam into light

into a room where your momma
held the skin gates open
and your NaNa held the heartbeat

machine, pressed to belly between
contractions, and everyone listened
to the sound of your name

chanted over and over
one hundred forty beats a minute
strong and strong

until you were ready. You pulled
your soft fins out of the socket
of me, and let go

of that deep ocean
swam into the sound of your heartbeat
into the sound of your momma

calling your name, my name
your NaNa breathing
with your mommas, with your midwife

easing your dark head
into the light and then your clean
fish body slipped up onto my chest

and your momma put her
hands on your head
holding
as much of you as she could
and you rested

on the soft sand dunes
of your mothers

strong and strong

our momma-talk

drying you. Our hands
opening, finally,
your own silver wings.

Wall, Emily, "Samantha's Births" *Prairie Schooner* 90, 3 (2016): 22.